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ABSTRACT

The Office of Teacher Education at the State University of New York at Buffalo and the Buffalo Public Schools have cooperatively developed the City Teaching Center, a preservice teacher education program which integrates theoretical learnings with field-based experiences in urban settings. Personnel of the center include both university staff (two directors and three graduate assistants) and public school staff (building administrators and cooperating teachers). Students accepted into the City Teaching Center observe and participate in classrooms in each cooperating middle and high school. In addition to the five designated center schools, students observe in many schools in various geographic and sociological settings to provide examples of contrasting philosophies of education and approaches to learning. A three component program has evolved composed of carefully designed offerings. In the first component, students examine sociological bases of education, observe teachers in various educational settings, and acquire ethnographic skills. Students in the second component of the center program obtain a macroview of teaching through involvement in a course which provides methods and techniques of teaching and requires extensive classroom participation in an urban setting. Through the use of the technique of microteaching during the final component of the center program, each student determines his/her own strengths and weaknesses and establishes both long and short range goals for individual professional development. (Author/BD)

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The City Teaching Center Program

of the

Office of Teacher Education
State University of New York at Buffalo

Submitted to the
American Asscciation of Colleges for Teacher Education

by

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Summary

The Office of Teacher Education at the State University of New York at Buffalo and the Buffalo Public Schools have cooperatively developed the City Teaching Center, a pre-service teacher education program which integrates theoretical learnings with field-based experiences in urban settings. Personnel of the Center include both university staff (two directors and three graduate assistants) and public school staff (building administrators and cooperating teachers).

Students accepted into the City Teaching Center observe and participate in classrooms in each cooperating middle and high school. In addition to the five designated Center schools, students observe in many schools in various geographic and sociological settings to provide examples of contrasting philosophies of education and approaches to learning.

During the seven years of the Center's existence, a three component program has evolved which is composed of carefully designed offerings essential to the preparation of teaching professionals. Students examine sociological bases of education, observe teachers in various educational settings, and acquire ethnographic skills in the first component. Coding techniques learned in the university classroom such as monitoring teacher questioning behavior are utilized by each student to more efficiently observe and interpret actual classroom interaction in the public school setting.

Students in the second component of the Center Program obtain a macro-view of teaching through involvement in a course which provides methods and techniques of teaching and requires extensive classroom participation in an urban setting. Through the use of the technique of micro-teaching during the final component of the Center Program, each student determines his/her own

strengths and weaknesses and establishes both long and short range goals for individual professional development. The student, in concert with a university supervisor and cooperating teacher, develops a highly individualized program to move toward attaining his/her specified goals.

This program includes both traditional and innovative techniques in teacher education presented in an exciting organizational structure. The partnership between the University and public schools provides a setting in which students develop skills and competencies necessary to become effective teachers while exploring extensively purposes of education and processes of learning.

Description and Development of the Program

Public schools have often been accused of failing to provide students with adequate skills to successfully find meaningful places in society. Urban schools have received the weight of criticism particularly in their attempts to educate the large number of minority students in their district population. Critics of public education have focused on such factors as a child's home background, the district's expenditure level per pupil, and variations in teacher performance.

The inability of many classroom teachers to cope with the multitude of problems found in city schools has caused some institutions of higher education to re-assess their programs in teacher education. They have come to realize that preparation of teachers for today's city schools must consist of more than a general liberal education with extensive academic work in specific subject areas. Professional education and career development is a task that demands a partnership of public school and university professionals.

This approach has been taken in the development of pre-service teaching centers in the Office of Teacher Education at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

A partnership was formed between the Buffalo Public Schools and the Office of Teacher Education in 1968 through a letter of agreement. The intent of this agreement was to create the City Teaching Center to provide educational experiences which would integrate the reality and practicality of public school classrooms with theoretical approaches offered by the University.

During the first year of program operation, a limited number of students were involved in a field-based experience in one inner-city junior high school. The City Teaching Center has expanded its services to include 75 students who participate in classrooms in three high schools and two middle schools.

The three-component program begins with an offering in Educational Sociology in which students examine urban schools as systems of social interaction. An on-campus seminar is complimented by field-based experiences through which students view public education and the teaching profession from a social scientist's perspective. Readings, discussions and ethnographic techniques facilitate the examination of the ways in which a school as a system differentiates and specializes various functions. Students analyze community structure, social change and lag, professionalism, administrative processes and alternatives to public education.

A course in the second component of the program, Teaching in Center Schools, presents a macro-view of teaching and provides a minimum of four periods a week in various field-based activities. Students gain an awareness of classroom routines, long and short range lesson planning, classroom

record-keeping procedures, a variety of teaching techniques (e.g., lecture, discussion, project, inquiry, tutorial, problem solving), teacher-pupil relations, and school-community relations. This course is designed to assist students in diagnosing individual needs and prescribing areas for further study while developing a sensitivity to the necessity of nurturing humanness in learning environments.

Audio/video feedback, peer teaching, micro-teaching and simulation activities are incorporated in a course offering during the third component which prepares students for student teaching in Center schools. Weekly conferences between students and instructors serve as the vehicle for individualized guidance throughout the eight-week student teaching experience.

Objectives

Goal statements and objectives have been developed to ensure efficient operation and evaluation of Center activities. Examples of goal statements for the City Teaching Center Program taken from "A Systems Manual for a Pre-Service Teaching Center" are as follows:

Goal 1. To define competencies which are only as detailed as is necessary to allow pre-service teachers a reasonable time to master and demonstrate their mastery.

Goal 3. To provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to actively share their impressions and experiences in the Center with their peers.

Goal 5. To develop in-service programs for staff members to aid them in their efforts to train pre-service teachers while strengthening their own professional expertise.

Objectives for the Center Program indicate what concepts are to be learned, how the concepts are to be demonstrated, who is to determine satisfactory knowledge of those concepts, and at what point in the program objectives are to be satisfied. An example of the objectives developed for the City Teaching Center Program is as follows:

> Objective 11. Pre-service teachers will demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Center Director and the cooperating teacher the knowledge of teaching procedures and lesson planning techniques through teaching mini-lessons, leading small group discussions, and tutoring individual students during Component II.

Personnel Involved

Personnel are involved in the Center Program at both the University and public schools. The Co-Directors of the City Center Program develop specific program content, instruct courses, evaluate the ability of pre-service teachers to demonstrate specified competencies, and evaluate program operations.

Advanced graduate students with public school teaching experience provide coordination between university and public school activities. In addition to assuming the traditional role of student teaching supervisor, these graduate students assist in instruction of Center courses, match pre-service teachers with cooperating teachers during the observation and participation components, and conduct weekly seminars during student teaching.

An administrator is designated within each school as a liason to plan school visits, to arrange placements for students with cooperating teachers, and to provide feedback to the Center Co-Directors as input to program

evaluation and development. Cooperating teachers allow pre-service teachers to observe and participate in classroom activities during each component. Progress of the pre-service teacher is assessed throughout the program by supervisors and cooperating teachers; strengths and weaknesses are discussed openly among all concerned.

Budget

Personnel involved in the City Center Program are hired either by the Faculty of Educational Studies at SUNYAB or by the Buffalo Public Schools. Materials and secretarial services are provided as needed through the budget of the Office of Teacher Education; thus a specific amount of money is not allocated to the City Teaching Center.

Contribution to the Improvement of Teacher Education

The organizational structure presented in the description of the City Teaching Center facilitates flexibility and innovation in teacher education. Adaptations of such techniques as individualized course offerings, sequential field experiences, continuous competency diagnosis, peer and micro-teaching, video and audio feedback, and effective self-assessment have been incorporated as part of the program.

The uniqueness and major contribution of the Center Program is the organizational structure that has evolved through the partnership established and maintained between the Office of Teacher Education at SUNYAB and the Buffalo Public Schools. This relationship has allowed a series of offerings to be designed which provide each pre-service teacher with maximum opportunities to mesh theoretical with practical approaches into an individualized style for effective functioning in a classroom setting.

Evaluation Methods and Results

Program effectiveness can best be improved if feedback obtained through evaluations are considered in program planning. Insights gained through both formal and informal evaluation mechanisms have helped improve the City Teaching Center.

Questionnaires are given to cooperating teachers during the last two components of the program to obtain feedback concerning specific students and the total Center Program. Students complete course evaluations on which they are asked to make comments concerning the program. A great deal of time is set aside during each course for student or instructor initiated discussions concerning relationships between courses at the University and observations at public schools. Individual interviews between each student and the course instructor are the culminating activity of each component. Assessments are made of both student strengths and weaknesses, of potential observation and student teaching placements, and of program effectiveness. Student comments in classes and in these individual conferences provide valuable insights into the operation of the Center.

Informal feedback from students, cooperating teachers, and administrators contributes additional input to the evaluation process. Informal gatherings, particularly with student teachers who have completed the program, give insights into areas needing improvement. Comments which students, cooperating teachers, and administrators make to student teacher supervisors are discussed at Center staff meetings. A major evaluation of the total program occurred as a systems manual was developed to describe the operation of the Center.

Decisions about program change or maintenance have been the result of these formal and informal evaluations. Course content and focus have changed to maintain relevance. Inputs of teachers and administrators have resulted in a greater

emphasis on field application. A significant result has been the expansion of the program into a third high school at the encouragement of the Office of Teacher Education and Buffalo Public Schools due to the effectiveness of the program.